



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Lt. Bernie Kale

Alaska National Guard fulfills young boy's wish to be a Soldier

CAMP DENALI, Alaska – The Alaska National Guard helped realize the dream of a nine-year old boy Monday, when he became a Soldier for the day on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Nathan Rothe, of Dallas, Texas, his family and best friend were in Alaska to participate in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race March 3, through the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which serves children with life-threatening medical conditions. Although not part of the Make-A-Wish event, Rothe also wanted to experience being a Soldier for a day while he was in Alaska.

The Alaska Army National Guard's B Company, 1-207th Aviation was asked to participate and, without hesitation, took the opportunity to show Nathan and his family what they do at Bryant Army Airfield, according to Capt. Brett Haker, maintenance officer for the aviation company.

"We dropped everything for this, and we have been preparing for this the past few weeks," Haker said. "It was the best experience we could give him in the short amount of time we were given with him."

Nathan, his family, and his best friend spent 30 minutes at Bryant on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson meeting with Alaska Army Guard aviators, taking photos, and sitting in the UH-60 Black Hawk pilot seats learning about the helicopter.

U.S. Army Alaska also participated in the Soldier for a Day event, giving the Rothe family a hands-on demonstration at the U.S. Army Alaska Range Control facilities and meeting with the 4-25th Brigade Combat Team (Airborne) Soldiers.

Rothe was diagnosed with Duchene Muscular Dystrophy at a young age, and the effects of the disease start to set in during the early teenage years. For right now, the Rothe family is making the best of the situation and working to get Nathan to enjoy all the life experiences that he wanted before his condition worsens, according to his father, Ted.

"The prognosis is, early teens, typically they are in a wheelchair," Rothe said. "Life expectancy, right now, is early 20s, but we are hoping that all will change for Nathan and that he would be able to grow up healthy and be a real Soldier."

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Link to video story:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9vKIZFeHJk&list=UU-mL7o0dsBJj_jHI-vrDm3Q&index=1&feature=plcp

Photo Cutlines:

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Capt. Brett Haker, maintenance officer, 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard makes 9-year-old Nathan Rothe, left, and his best friend, 10-year-old Collin Prokasy, honorary UH-60 Black Hawk pilots and members of the Alaska Army National Guard's 1-207th Aviation March 5. Rothe, who is from Dallas, Texas, has Duchene Muscular Dystrophy and was in Alaska to participate in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The Soldier for a Day event was supported by U.S. Army Alaska and the Alaska Army National Guard and was not a part of or affiliated with the Make-A-Wish event. Photo: Staff Sgt. Karima Turner, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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9-year-old Nathan Rothe, left, and his best friend, 10-year-old Collin Prokasy, proudly show-off their new flight jackets after being made honorary UH-60 Black Hawk pilots and members of the Alaska Army National Guard 1-207th Aviation March 5. Rothe, who is from Dallas, Texas, has Duchene Muscular Dystrophy and was in Alaska to participate in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The Soldier for a Day event was supported by U.S. Army Alaska and the Alaska Army National Guard and was not a part of or affiliated with the Make-A-Wish event. Photo: Staff Sgt. Karima Turner, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs

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Capt. Brett Haker, maintenance officer, 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, shows 9-year-old Nathan Rothe of Dallas, Texas, how the control panel of a UH-60 Black Hawk works. As part of Soldier for a Day, Rothe and his best friend, Collin Prokasy, were made honorary UH-60 Black Hawk pilots and members of the Alaska Army National Guard 1-207th Aviation March 5. Rothe, who is from Dallas, Texas, has Duchene Muscular Dystrophy and was in Alaska to participate in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The Soldier for a Day event was supported by U.S. Army Alaska and the Alaska Army National Guard and was not a part of or affiliated with the Make-A-Wish event. Photo: Staff Sgt. Karima Turner, Alaska National Guard Public Affairs